



For immediate release
December 4, 2000

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It's not just for cities anymore...
Rural Missouri relies on international business too

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Once the exclusive domain of big-city business, today international connections are often just as important to rural businesses.

Highlighting the theme of rural business connections around the globe, the “Marketplace” program featured on National Public Radio stations will broadcast live all week from Voss’s Truck Stop in the town of Cuba, in east central Missouri. In Missouri, NPR affiliates usually run the program at 6 or 6:30 p.m.

Rural Missouri is becoming increasingly attractive to investors from overseas. Of the 250 companies in Missouri with international investment, at least 45 are based in rural areas, employing nearly 19 percent of the 65,000 Missourians who work for these international firms.

In addition, Missouri exports more than \$8 billion in manufactured goods, and currently more than 160 companies in Missouri export products overseas. Goods are often made in Missouri at a rural plant, then transported to distribution centers in a metropolitan area or another state for export to the international marketplace.

“Missouri’s small-town businesses are becoming aware of the need to engage in the global marketplace,” said Joseph L. Driskill, director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development. “Rural Missouri communities are vital to the welfare of our state, not only because of their history and work ethic, but increasingly because their businesses affect the economic, bottom-line viability of the state.”

Missouri has several foreign trade zones, ports along the Mississippi River and an excellent highway system that can support increased exports. Efforts are under way to develop an export-processing center in the Kansas City area, and many of the small ports in Missouri’s river towns are increasing their export activities.

Tourism also is a major industry for rural areas. Missouri draws about 500,000 international visitors to the state each year. The figure includes about 220,000 overseas visitors and Canadians traveling by air. Missouri also attracts a large number of visitors who travel by car from Mexico and Canada, but who are very difficult to count.

Tourists from overseas often come to experience Missouri’s rivers; its historic sites such as those involving Mark Twain; or its musical attractions in ragtime, jazz and country. They often choose Missouri because of its central location, which to some symbolizes the “real” United States. Many from European countries, such as Germany and France, like to visit areas of the state where immigrants from their home countries settled.

For more information about opportunities for your company in the international marketplace, contact Missouri’s Office of International Marketing at <http://www.ecodev.state.mo.us/intermark> or call us at 888-690-4855 toll free or 573-751-4999.